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SHAKESPEARE'S RHETORICAL CONCERNS IN KING LEAR

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Shakespeare's Rhetorical Concerns in "King Lear" submitted by Sandra E. Seggewiss in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Though Humanist rhetorical theory affirms the civilizing force of language, it is aware of the destruction that can ensue from the improper use of words. Hence, theorists insist that man correlate speech and action. Shakespeare generally concurs with this doctrine of decorum; and he extends it into the world of his plays. The thesis proposes that in King Lear Shakespeare's rhetorical concerns come to the fore. In this play he acknowledges the uncertain, imperfect world that we inhabit; and he shows that if civil order is to prevail, then society must be founded upon truthfulness. The two main threats to social well-being are ignorance and deception. Lear's ignorance of the symbolic nature of language and the subtleties of rhetoric cause him to misjudge his daughters' love orations. The result is personal and civil disorder. Edgar, on the other hand, uses rhetoric indiscriminately as he builds comforting illusions of life to alleviate human suffering. Shakespeare validates his own rhetorical stance in the play as he consistently smashes all false constructs of reality to show "how this world goes". As Lear and Edgar learn, "large speeches" and poetic lies are no substitute for the challenge of life. Civilization demands honesty. Hence, "we must speak what we feel, not what we ought to say".

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE HUMANIST CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE AND SHAKESPEARE'S RHETORICAL CONCERNS	1
II.	KING LEAR AND RHETORICAL DISORDERING	17
III.	RHETORICAL UNBUTTONING: THE BEGINNING OF LINGUISTIC RECONSTRUCTION	32
IV.	"NATURE'S ABOVE ART": FALSE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTS DEMOLISHED AND TOWARD A RHETORIC OF TRUTH	46
	FOOTNOTES	60
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	65
	APPENDIX OF RHETORICAL TERMS	73

CHAPTER I

THE HUMANIST CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE AND SHAKESPEARE'S RHETORICAL CONCERNS

Following his great speech on "degree" in Troilus and Cressida, Ulysses criticizes Achilles' scurrilous jests at and Patroclus' inept travesties of Greek martial policy and command (I.ii.142-184; 196-220).[1] Nestor accordingly complains of the foul contagion spreading throughout the camp whereby, "in imitation of these twain," others subsequently are encouraged "to match" their superiors "in comparisons with dirt" (I.iii.186-196). Shortly afterwards, Ulysses again censures Achilles' lack of propriety:

> Things small as nothing, for request's sake only,
> He makes important. Possessed he is with greatness,
> And speaks not to himself but with a pride
> That quarrels at self-breath. Imagined worth
> Holds in his blood such swoln and hot discourse
> That 'twixt his mental and his active parts
> Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages
> And batters down himself
>
> (Tro. II.iii.170-175).

In a play that has much to say about the verbal and behavioral inadequacies of its characters, these comments of Ulysses and Nestor clearly extend far beyond their immediate dramatic function of concretizing the Ulyssean oration on the hierarchies of being. Ulysses' criticism of the errant Greek commanders is both moral and literary. Certainly, the rhetorically attuned Renaissance playgoer would view Achilles' "swoln and hot discourse" as proof of his disordered personality. More significantly, though, they would comprehend the officers' verbal abuses as a threat to social order. Contemporary literary theory points

out clearly the importance of speech in maintaining the quality of living. Thomas Wilson in The Arte of Rhetoric comments pertinently about the relationship between speech and life. He emphasizes that language is one of our most important ordering forces. Apparently considering words rather like instruments of war, he declares that speech ought to be wielded to protect civilizations, to uphold justice, and to conserve the truth. Moreover, Wilson maintains that eloquence is much superior to military prowess. When they are properly used, words can settle civil disputes without loss of blood.[2] Assuredly, then, the sixteenth century audience would unhesitatingly condemn the verbal behaviour of these officers as unmilitary and unethical. Admittedly, all might not be wholly aware of the subtler implications of rhetoric; nevertheless, these theatregoers--artisans and nobility alike--would generally understand that if harmony is to be restored at all within the Greek camp, then words must be set aright.[3]

In short, then, a profound philosophy of language underlies Ulysses and Nestor's censure of the self-destructive bombast of haughty Achilles and the poisonous tongues of his unruly faction. These concerns with language, moreover, are not confined to Troilus and Cressida. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare was well aware of the problems associated with rhetoric. Insofar as language itself is amoral, it is a highly dangerous weapon when used indiscriminately or malevolently. Hence, this apprehension about rhetoric being used to desublimate the human condition can be noted in many of his plays. We need only recall a few of the great artificers of language such as Richard III, Iago, Edmund, and the "glib and oily" tongues of Lear's conniving daughters to assure ourselves that Shakespeare's concern with words is deep-rooted. Since the playwright's

own ethical and aesthetic views are grounded in Humanist rhetorical theory, it seems prudent to glance at the philosophy of language that pervades Shakespeare's dramatic form.

English Humanist rhetorical theory derives from the concerns of the Socratic era, when the practical teachings of the Sophists gave rise to an eternal controversy about the nature and function of the persuasive mode. The teachings and practices of the Sophists implied that rhetoric was merely a verbal craft. Should the orator employ the devices of argument and persuasion skilfully, then, no matter which subject he might debate, he would achieve his goal. Socrates protests strongly against this shoddy philosophy of means and ends. In Gorgias, he declares that if rhetoricians are merely "men who win their point" regardless of the particular requirements or ethics of a case, then the "art of speaking" can only be regarded as trickery. Moreover, since the majority of legal and civil affairs are conducted through the medium of oration, Socrates concludes that most political and forensic successes make a mockery of truth and justice.[4] He upholds this position in Phaedrus when he declares that such vulgar persuasive practices render rhetoric a craft of "lying . . . devoid of art"; and he maintains that its exponents deal in blurred appearances and gross probabilities, which can neither illuminate doctrine nor serve truth. On the other hand, Socrates makes it quite clear that a man's good intentions are not sufficient to qualify him as a rhetor; and he notes the tremendous harm that can result from ignorant speech:

> Soc: And when the orator . . . puts good for evil, being himself as ignorant of their true nature as the city on which he imposes is ignorant; and having studied the notions of the multitude, falsely persuades them . . . about good which he confounds with evil,--what will be the harvest which rhetoric will be likely to gather after the sowing of that seed?
> Phaedr: The reverse of good
>
> (Phdr. 260).

Here, of course, we arrive at the essence of Socratic thought: the identification of knowledge with virtue and the firm belief that the wise man alone is capable of communicating truth and maintaining social order.

It is these beliefs that underlie the Socratic-Platonic aesthetic theory that in order to be acknowledged as a true rhetorician, the speaker must show a firm grasp of the art of dialectics: he must possess the capacity to reason; he must own the ability to discriminate; he must have arrived at truth. And Socrates pronounces that for an orator

> not to know the nature of justice and injustice, and good and evil, and not to be able to distinguish the dream from reality, cannot in truth be otherwise than disgraceful to him even though he have the applause of the whole world
>
> (Phdr. 277).

Clearly, Socrates considers such vocalizing as a masquerade of the oratorical art. Hence, he stands firm in his postulate that "there never is nor never will be a real art of speaking which is divorced from the truth" (Phdr. 260). Consequently, he exiles both persuaders and speech that fail to promote moral and mental enlightenment as aggravating the existing cancer of civil discord.

Not surprisingly, Socrates' opprobious dismissal of current oratorical practices and his substitution of a wholly philosophical rhetoric dealt the art a severe blow. Aristotle, an instructor of

rhetoric at Plato's Academy, tackles the problem firmly and systematically. Significantly, his Rhetoric opens with the assertion that "[r]hetoric is the counterpart of dialectic."[5] Unlike Plato, Aristotle considers "dialectic" more as a practical, inferential method of ordering social concerns (ethics and politics) than a deductive metaphysical demonstration. Yet, despite this difference of approach, Aristotle largely implements the Platonic oratorical mode: in Rhetoric he links the art of persuasion firmly with dialectics through the enytheme; and he conjoins the ethical and aesthetical disciplines through his maxim that the "good" (skilful) orator must be of unimpeachable character. Notably, elsewhere in his works the rhetor holds the status of social legislator. Regardless of his theoretical combination of verbal skill and moral purpose, the Stagirite remains uneasy about the extreme vulnerability of language. Somewhat like Socrates, he admits, "A man can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these [devices of rhetoric], and inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly" (Rh. I.i.1355^{b}). Hence, Aristotle is driven to concede that "[w]hat makes a man a 'sophist' is not his faculty, but his [deficiency of] moral purpose" (Rh. I.i.1355^{b}).

The dilemma of ascertaining eloquent falsehoods from factual knowledge and of apprehending 'truth' in a world of actuality extends throughout Rhetoric. This largely accounts for the difficulties Aristotle encounters in reconciling the Platonic and theoretical "truth" and "good" with their practical or expedient applications in the human sphere.[6] Hence, though he thoroughly investigates the mechanics and morals of the orator's task, Aristotle can formulate no absolute rules. He can only advocate that the speaker approach his topic and treat his audience

prudently and that he strictly observe the demands of particular cases when evaluating the material of any rhetorical presentation.

Though the Roman rhetoricians were less philosophical and more practical than the Greeks, they nonetheless deplored the shadow that Socrates' investigations in Gorgias and Phaedrus had cast over persuasive discourse. Consequently, the majority of their discussions on the proprieties of arguments and styles is founded on their belief in the formative power of words. It is thus that Cicero and Quintillian associate eloquence with virtue and rationality and postulate language as the primary civilizing agent of humanity. The crux of their argument is this: language is the elemental attribute that distinguishes man from other living creatures; it is the expression, and hence the cast and measure, of the human faculties of reason and intelligence; and, ultimately, language is the primary force whose harmonies (both sensuously and rationally appealing) persuaded man to abandon his bestial state of predatory solitude and to form a civil community. Furthermore, Cicero and Quintillian make quite clear that man can retain his civility by properly observing the proprieties of life and speech.[7]

The notion of the eloquent speaker as an archetypal creator of society gained momentum in sixteenth-century England. Humanist thinkers of the era, following the lead of Cicero and Quintillian, incorporated the ancient myth of the orator drawing man out of the barbarous, irrational chaos of a sadly fallen world with the verbal foundations of the Biblical Fall and Redemption. Thomas Wilson is but one of the many Renaissance theorists who promulgate this view. In the "Preface" to his Arte of Rhetorique he claims that "Eloquence [was] first given by God, and after lost by man, and last repayred by God again"; and he proceeds

to associate suasive discourse with Divine Blessedness, virtue, reason, and knowledge. Discussing the helpless misery of the sadly-deceived victims of the satanic tongue, Wilson declares of disgraced man

> And thus for lacke of skill, and for want of grace euill so prevailed, that the deuil was most esteemed, and God either almost vnknowne among them all, or els nothing feared among so many. Therefore, euen now when man was thus past all hope of amendement, God still tendering his owne workmanshippe, stirring vp his faithful and elect, to persuade with reason all men to societie. And gaue his appointed Ministers knowledge both to see the natures of men, and also graunted them the gift of vtteraunce, that they might with ease win folk at their will, and frame them by reason to all good order. . . . And . . . the rude . . . being somewhat drawne, and delited with the pleasantnesse of reason, and the sweetnesse of vtteraunce: after a certaine space they became through Nurture and good aduisement, of wilde, sober: of cruell, gentle: of fooles, wise: and of beastes, men: such force hath the tongue, and such is the power of Eloquence and reason, that most men are forced, euen to yeeld in that which most standeth against their will.

Thomas Wilson thus sanctifies the art of speaking.

Yet, though he places great faith in the creative capacities of eloquence, Wilson's "Preface" nevertheless recognizes that such is the nature of the eloquent art that not only might it degenerate in a corrupt society, but it might be successfully appropriated to destroy the quality of human existence. Hence, the body of The Arte of Rhetorique sets forth tropes and figures such as those eloquent sages had deployed for the oral regeneration of mankind; and, at the same time, it cautions the reader about the "great mischiefe an euill tongue" can effect (AR, p. 117).

Of course, Thomas Wilson did not stand alone in his stricture that the devices of rhetoric must be propritiously employed. Renaissance theorists in general were sensitive to the harmful potentialities of suasive discourse. Hence, they made little distinction between moral and rhetorical concerns when they came to evaluate either spoken or written

speech. Certainly, the contemporary courtesy books testify to this in their treatment of communicational modes: after considering the ethical virtues and vices of language--truthfulness, modesty, lying, swearing, boasting, flattery, raillery, and so forth--these works proceed correlatively to discuss the rhetorical principles of civil conversation.[8] In such an age, which was extremely reluctant to separate eloquence from virtue, it is not surprising to find secular and religious theorists alike energetically denouncing any improper use (ethical or stylistic) of words. Consequently, it is not difficult to appreciate their mutual abhorrence of a malicious or insincere speaker. Hence, for instance, when Thomas Nashe admonishes "that which we thinke let vs speake, and that which we speake let vs thinke; let our speache accord with our life," he voices precisely this civil philosophy.[9]

This desired harmony between thoughts and words and between speech and action, better known as decorum, was a fundamental rule for all acceptable linguistic expression. Though sixteenth-century treatises on oratory study in detail the manifold tropes and figures and when these might most aptly be used within the five parts of rhetoric (invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and utterance), these works clearly hold aesthetic effect secondary to moral intent. Subsequently, the acutely conscious attempt to find the appropriate thing to say and the correspondingly fitting manner of saying it provided an ethical and literary norm for evaluating oral and written material, whether it was speech, a poem, or a play. Hence, decorum, much in the Ciceronian sense of De Oratore, was once again acclaimed an "universal rule" in society and art alike. Even George Puttenham, whose view of art generally is much more hedonistic than that of earlier humanists such as Wilson,

Ascham, Cheke, Peacham, or Sidney, maintains that life itself is an art and that civilization is undoubtedly a social and artistic concept. Consequently, in The Arte of English Poesie he declares that poets and orators both ought to "know the comelinesse of an action as well as of a word";[10] and he views the aesthetic and civil application of propriety as a constant exercise in adjustment to the multifarious experiences of life and art.

Puttenham's poetic theory is bound up in his notion of nature. Unlike many of his near contemporaries, he professes a primarily benevolent view of humanity and the phenomenal world. Though he acknowledges man's mortal inclinations and imperfections, Puttenham is quite confident of humanity's essential goodness and rationality. Hence, he is much less rigorous than the puritan humanists in his judgements of the didactic dimensions of art. He conceives the recreational elements of literature as a natural fulfillment of man's innate need for harmless pleasure. Of course, this general benignity tempers Puttenham's view of rhetoric. Though he acknowledges the tremendous magnetism of persuasive speech, particularly its aptitude to "inveigl[e] the mind," Puttenham "brushes aside as irrelevant the old distrust of colours and figures"[11] and glories in the "bewtifull habite of language and stile, and figuratiue speaches" (AEP, p. 143).

On the other hand, Puttenham's delight in words does not extend to the obvious immoralities of speech. Sensitive to the cultural responsibilities of literature and language, in his Arte Puttenham emphasizes the virtues of clear, natural expression; and he decries the vices of verbal excess or deficiency. Governing his conception of the suasive art is his general theory of language. As much a purist as some

of his critical colleagues regarding word-making and word-using, Puttenham advocates "a speache . . . fully fashioned to the common vnderstanding." He insists upon a chaste and normal diction. Poet and orator alike must use the "naturall, pure, and most vsuall [speech] of all his countrey" and avoid the pseudo-scholarly "peevish affectation of words out of the primitiue langvages" (AEP, p. 144). Soraismus (the unnecessary use of inkhorn terms), however, is not the only obstacle to a clear native language. Since the drive for a strong mother tongue was fundamentally the desire for both accurate and effective communication, any word, rhetorical trope, or figure that misled an audience (or reader) was condemned as constructing a false impression of the truth of things.

The most contemptible of these linguistic vices are those stemming from a speaker's intent either to impress his listener through verbal exhibitionism or to conceal the truth about something through verbal distortions. Prominent among Puttenham's catalogue of faults of speech is cacozelia (to "affect new words and phrases," to coigne fine words out of the Latin . . . and to use new fangled speaches"). Other affectations are classed under surplusage: pleonasmus ("too full speache"), macrologia ("large clauses and sentences more than is requisite to the matter"), periergia ("ouer-labor" in attempt to appear highly refined in expression), and the most treacherous of these--a vice dominant in Achilles--bomphiologia ("using such bombasted words, as seeme altogether farced full of winde, beung a great deal too loftie for the matter"). Perhaps even more insidious than these, however, are the foul diminishers: distorters of truth such as cacemphaton ("wordes as may be drawen to a foul and vnshamefast sence") and tapinosis ("such wordes and termes as do diminish and abbase the matter . . . impairing the dignity,

height, vigour or maiestie of the cause").

The necessity of maintaining a proper relationship between subject-matter and style, moreover, applies not only to diction and ornament, but also to delivery ("the speech of [the] body"). Indeed, from antiquity to the English Renaissance "comlie moderation" was the elocutionary measure for both orator and actor. Though wild gesticulators such as Hamlet's Termagent actors might thrill the groundling, they offended the prudent man, who viewed such excesses as a grievous debasement of the art of expression.[12]

A somewhat similar view of propriety is evinced, moreover, in the animadversions against the tainting of genre. Particularly distasteful is the admixing of tragedy and comedy, the intermingling of kings and jesters, and the using of wit in weighty circumstances. In his discussion of genre, Puttenham demands a staunch fidelity to "degree and decencie" within each form:

> all hymnes and histories, and Tragedies, were written in the high stile: all Comedies and Enterludes and other common Poesies of loues, and such like in the meane stile, all Eglogues and pastorall poemes in the low and base stile, otherwise they had bene vtterly disproporcioned: . . . But generally the high stile is disgraced and made foolish and ridiculous by all wordes affected, counterfait, and puffed vp, as it were a windball carrying more countenance then matter, and can not be better resembled then to these midsommer pageants in London, where to make people wonder are set forth great and vglie Gyants marching as if they were aliue, and armed at all points, but within they are stuffed full of browne paper and tow, which the shrewd boyes vnderpeering, do guilefully discouer and turne to a great derision: also all darke and vnaccustomed wordes, or rusticall and homely, and sentences that hold too much of the mery & light, or infamous & vnshamefast are to be accounted of the same sort, for such speaches become not Princes, nor great estates, nor them that write of their doings to vtter or report and intermingle with the graue and weightie matters
>
> (AEP, p. 153).

Puttenham's protestations here are characteristic of his age. Yet, despite such weighty remonstrances, Renaissance drama persistently echoed its lusty Medieval progenitor; and the mode notably thrived upon a captivating amalgam of the sublime, the mean, and the grotesque. Clearly, William Shakespeare's plays are no exception, for they abound in indecorous juxtapositions. This does not mean, however, that Shakespeare uncritically accepts such bastardizing and justifies this mode as an artistic concession to audience taste. On the contrary, I believe he adheres to the traditional view of an ordered being in life and art that decries such practices as monstrous. Consequently, he censures all indecencies by making that which is unseemly the subject--and, at times, the shaping force--of his plays. As T. McAlindon observes in Shakespeare and Decorum, "Whenever in his [Shakespeare's] plays the improper occurs, it is generally a means whereby he registers upon the aesthetic sense an intense visual or auditory perception of those defects, lapses or perversions of judgement which are the source of tragic or comic action."[13] In the Shakespearean realm, moreover, those judgmental insufficiencies generally stem from a character's inadequate sensitivity to the rhetorical means by which man creates or controls his world. It is thus, as I hope the succeeding discussion of Shakespeare's rhetorical concerns will show, that one comes to comprehend the linguistic governance of form in his plays and to recognize generic indiscretions in the Shakespearean theatre of life as semantic microcosms of a verbally disordered actuality.

Admittedly one does not have to resort to those dramas in which Shakespeare deploys formal unseemliness to discover his prevailing concern

with the suasive art and the awesome potency of a "glib and oily tongue." Such oral preoccupations are evident in the dramatist's more obviously "rhetorical plays." I Henry VI, for instance, fearfully acknowledges the magnetism of a false rhetor in the well known "persuasion scenes" as Joan La Pucelle convinces Charles to transfer his martial command into her hands (I.iii) and bewitches Burgundy "with her words" to engineer his shift in allegiance from England to France (III.iii).

Richard III significantly contrasts oratorical craft with moral argument in the famous battle exhortations of Richard and Richmond (V.iii). Richard's battle-cry is a vigorous denigration whereby noble Richmond is dextrously reduced to but "a milk-sop" and his followers to "base lackey peasants." Notably, Richard's vibrant, inflammatory rhetoric titillates many an artistic sensibility. For instance, Wolfgang Clemen is moved to "reluctant admiration" for the tyrant; and he comes dangerously close to claiming that Richard's linguistic feats temporarily redeem him in our eyes.[14] Yet, stirring as these fiery sophistries might be, Shakespeare sanctions no such vicious diminishment. The playwright clearly counters any lapse of auditor judgment as Richard's aesthetic magnitude shrinks considerably in the face of Richmond's logically articulated moral edifice.

A brief consideration of the earl's adhortatio reveals its suasive superiority: the speaker, calm and firm, commences with the ethical prerogative "God and our good cause fight on our side"; he moves to expose the falsity of Richard's monarchical pretensions ("a base, foul stone; . . . falsely set" upon England's throne) and the baseness of his usurping self ("a bloody tyrant and a homicide"); and, finally, in highly patterned language, he establishes firmly the causal relationship between

deeds and consequences:

> Then if you fight against God's enemy,
> God will in justice ward you as his soldiers;
> If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
> You sleep in peace, the tyrany being slain;
> . . .
> If you do free your children from the sword,
> Your children's children quits it in your age.
> Then, in the name of God and all these rights,
> Advance your standards, draw your willing swords
> (R3. V.iii.254-257; 262-265).

By the oration's conclusion, duty is thus eloquently established and volition is become a moral imperative whereby the call to arms is rendered both ethically and rhetorically irresistible.

Richard and Richmond's exhortations clearly foreshadow the action when, ultimately, the earl's rhetoric of truth becomes realized through his martial victory. It would be grossly inaccurate to claim, nevertheless, that in an oratorical conflict of right and wrong either truth or its adversary is so readily discernible or that logic and ethics ultimately triumph over artifice. In this same play, Richard's outrageous proposal to the Lady Anne is an awesome dramatic recognition of what poets and orators from antiquity to the sixteenth century have ever acknowledged: this horrendous power of the suasive tool, when plied for devious ends, to distort judgement and effect actions contrary to reason and personal convictions. Despite her knowledge that this fiend is the murderer of her husband and her father-in-law, Anne is verbally compelled into acquiescence. She departs to Crosby Palace to await Richard's return, while her newly betrothed maliciously displaces Anne as chief mourner in the funeral procession.

In addition to the shocking triumph of Richard's verbal artifice, the grotesqueness of proposing marriage during the funeral

procession suggests Shakespeare's apprehension about the possibility of a linguistically malformed world. Certainly this concern is noted in Othello, where Iago, the double-dealing persuader, "pours pestilence" into Othello's ear and converts the Moor's vision of an ordered marital state into a cracked mosaic of filth, distrust, madness, and, ultimately, murder. Particularly odious is the handkerchief scene, where Iago manipulates the gap between appearance and reality to present Othello with "ocular proof" of Desdemona's adulterous love for Cassio:

> Iago: Did you perceive how [Casio] laughed at his vice?
> Othello: O Iago!
> Iago: And did you see the handkerchief?
> Othello: Was that mine?
> Iago: Yours, by this hand! And to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! She gave it him, and he hath giv'n it his whore.
> Othello: I would have him nine years a-killing!--A fine woman, a fair woman, a sweet woman?
> Iago: Nay, you must forget that
>
> (Oth. IV.i.171-180).

Hence, Othello slides from love into the madness of revenge; and, in what is perhaps one of the most horrifying rhetorical images in Shakespeare's plays, the Moor vows "I'll chop her into messes."

Iago's malevolent artifice clearly foreshadows that of Edmund in King Lear. Certainly the incident of the handkerchief anticipates the bastard's later interpretation of the fencing match, which he arranges as "auricular proof" of Edgar's supposed treachery to Gloucester. There are, of course, other similarities between Iago and Edmund. For instance, Iago's mockery of Roderigo's style and of traditional moral values in his "Virtue? A fig!" speech (Oth. I.iii.314-327) largely previews Edmund's parody of Gloucester's rhetoric and concept of "degree" in his rejoining "This is excellent foppery of the world" (Lr. I.ii.121-136).[15] The

point here is not to make a comparison between Iago and Edmund's verbal techniques. Rather, it is to note Shakespeare's continuing interest in the manner in which man uses language to suit his particular schemes. Iago misuses rhetoric to construct false images of Desdemona and Cassio and the result is domestic tragedy. In King Lear, though, Shakespeare envisions rhetorical abuses on a much larger scale as he bodies forth a world shattered by speech.

CHAPTER II

KING LEAR AND RHETORICAL DISORDERING

> Neither can his mind be thought in tune, whose words do jarre;
> nor his reason in frame whose sentence is preposterous
> (Ben Jonson, Discoveries).

Though Shakespeare deals multifariously in his plays with the destructive capacity of words, generally he counters any real negativism with its antithesis and concludes with the dramatic restoration of rhetorical and civil order. Recall, for instance, that in Richard III the villain's oral prowess secures him the throne; nevertheless, Richard's malevolent rhetoric ultimately suffers defeat. Hence, "civil wounds are stopped, [and] peace lives again." Again, in Othello Iago's venomous tongue is finally silenced. Moreover, when Othello realizes that he has been a victim of equivocation, he undertakes what might be termed a rhetorical reconstruction: he pronounces his own death sentence, delivers his own eulogy, and bolsters words with action to "die upon a kiss." In King Lear, on the other hand, Shakespeare apparently resists the aesthetic impulse to reorder. Admittedly, in his dying moments Edmund attempts to rescind Cordelia's death sentence, but his endeavour is frustrated. Consequently, even after his agonistic endurances Lear is then forced to witness the murder of his youngest daughter. As a result, he reverts to madness and dies; and the aged monarch's demise marks the end of his lineage. Despite these serious and painful events, the tragedy concludes with Edgar's seemingly inadequate maxim that we ought to "speak what we feel, not what we ought to say."

Understandably, then, King Lear has disturbed its audiences

almost since the time of its inception. The prologue to Ben Jonson's comedy Volpone, probably written within the same year as King Lear, contains a veiled criticism of the "monstrous and forc'd action" of Shakespeare's tragedy.[1] A century later, John Dennis, horrified at the play's indecorous outcome, is driven to question the didactic value of this tragedy:

> Shakespeare has been wanting in the exact distribution of poetical justice . . . in most of his best tragedies, in which the guilty and the innocent perish promiscuously; as . . . Cordelia, Kent, and King Lear . . . . The good and the bad then perishing promiscuously in the best of Shakespeare's tragedies, there can be either none or very weak instruction in them.[2]

Significantly, the Restoration and Eighteenth Century adaptations of King Lear are largely the outgrowths of such dramatic concerns. Moreover, the success of these revisions, particularly the longevity of Nahum Tate's popular romantic and poetically just Lear, reflects the continuity of this general dissatisfaction with the original work.[3] Even that sane and astute critic Dr. Samuel Johnson found the play greatly distressing. Though Johnson did concede that Shakespeare's dramatic conclusion probably mirrored reality much more accurately than a poetically just outcome, he protested nonetheless that a play in which "the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry" constituted a grave ethical and aesthetic matter.[4] Hence, when he edited Shakespeare's plays some years later, he accordingly revised the final scenes of King Lear.

Dr. Johnson's viewpoint noticeably anticipates some later critical responses, for much modern criticism defines itself through its approach to the play's outcome. For instance, A. C. Bradley views King Lear as essentially a Christian drama and in discussing "The Redemption

of Lear" focuses on Lear's mental and spiritual progress. Bradley's approach suffers a setback, however, when he comes to explain the play's conclusion. He cannot reconcile the extreme suffering and sense of devastation exuded in the final scenes with his critical bias; and eventually Bradley declares the tragedy flawed.[5] Other scholars attempt to solve the dilemma by postulating that King Lear ultimately offers us recourse to a transcendent morality. O. J. Campbell expounds this theory when he proclaims Cordelia a Christ figure and views her hanging as symbolic of the utmost Christian sacrifice. Despite the Christian symbols and Biblical rhetoric associated with her, the play's action does not permit us to claim Cordelia as the Saviour of Mankind.[6] Campbell's reading carries with it the suggestion that the critic conceives King Lear in the light of a morality play. Such an approach is analogous to the earlier revision of the play, for it similarly reduces Shakespeare's complex, ambiguous tragedy to something less than it is.[7]

Perhaps a more prudent approach to King Lear is through the drama's language. Sigurd Burkhardt in "King Lear: the Quality of Nothing" sees Lear's flaw as "a proud faith in the substantiality of words." The critic then pursues the notion that during his agon Lear learns the representative nature of language; and he interprets the concluding scenes as the king's "bitterly earned" insight that language is incapable of communicating the essence of experience or of pure states. Accordingly, Burkhardt maintains that Edgar's insistence that we must "speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" is not wholly realizable since "there can be honesty in speaking what we feel, but what we ought to say is the naked truth, and it cannot be said."[8] Undoubtedly, Burkhardt's scholarship contributes immensely to our comprehension of the

thematic significance of language in the play; nevertheless, Shakespeare's engagement with language, and subsequently Edgar's summation, is broader and subtler than Burkhardt's analysis seems to concede. I suggest that, among other things, the dramatist's linguistic preoccupations come to the fore in this tragedy. The succeeding discussion, thence, seeks to illustrate that Shakespeare's rhetorical concerns are mirrored within King Lear mainly through its characters' deployment of the suasive mode as it enables them to survive in or to alter (positively or negatively) the state of their world. As a corollary of this investigation, I hope to establish that the painful final scenes of King Lear are a necessary outcome of the play's rhetorical action and that Edgar's concluding speech is a wholly realistic affirmation of the Humanistic doctrine of decorum.

The most obvious and perhaps most comprehensive illustration of the manifold problems associated with the suasive mode in King Lear occurs in the first scene, when the abdicating monarch decides to apportion the realm according to his daughters' oral proficiency and "unburthen'd crawl toward death." No one, I think, questions the imprudence of Lear's act. Yet, scholars occasionally comment favorably about the king's "ceremonial language" or speak of his "Byzantine stateliness" at this early stage in the drama.[9] In light of Lear's unkingly attitude such praise is alarming, for it implies an artistic discrepancy between style and deed right from the outset of the play. Such a notion is belied, though, at the beginning of Lear's initial speech as we note his "most indecorous image of the crawler toward

death."[10] Moreover, a perusal of the remainder of this speech reveals the monarch's rhetorical capacities to be as tragically inept as his royal command:

> . . . Tell me, my daughters,
> (Since now we will divest us both of rule,
> Interest of territory, cares of state)
> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
> That we our largest bounty may extend
> Where nature doth with merit challenge
> (I.i.47-52).

Despite his repeated use of the royal "we" and the semblance of dignified oral control he achieves through the balanced cadences of parison ("divest us both of rule,/ interest of territory, cares of state"), Lear's speech is actually an exemplar of indecorum.[11] The king's diction especially warrants censure. For instance, his application of the terminology of law and property rights--"interest," "territory," "bounty . . . extend," and "merit"--to a situation involving love reveals Lear to be guilty of a form of abusio (notably catachresis: an incompatibility between words and the matter they seek to describe). Furthermore, these expressions are inkhorn terms, for they originate in the Latin and French languages. It was precisely this indiscriminate adoption of foreign expressions that the Tudor linguists animadverted against as corrupting the native English tongue and rendering it uncourtly. Berowne, too, saw the error of his ways and ultimately forswore all "spruce affectation,/ [and] figures pedantical" (LLL., V.408-409). In light of this, we must acknowledge Lear's unjustifiable use of soraismus as doubly emphatic of his verbal shortcomings.

Lear's linguistic deficiencies extend significantly beyond the sphere of style to touch upon a more fundamental rhetorical problem. The

king's use of abusio notably divulges his mistaken notion that qualitative states (experiences such as love) can be measured and hence can be articulated in precise, quantitative terms. His consequent insistence that his daughters "shall . . . say [who] doth love us most," his willingness to accept their spoken word as "the thing itself," and his determination to reorder the kingdom according to his appreciation of what, under these circumstances, can only amount to a vacuous love formula, discloses the regent's complete ignorance of the symbolic nature of language. Such grave conceptual and stylistic inadequacies clearly render Lear unfit to judge the rhetorical contest he has so imperiously initiated. Moreover, as Puttenham points out in his Arte, the subtleties and complexities of the suasive mode are such that only an experienced rhetor and astute observer of human behaviour is capable of determining the credibility of an oral profession:

> [S]ince the actions of man with their circumstances be infinite, and the world likewise replenished with many iudgements, it may be a question who shal haue the determination of such controversie as may arise whether this or that action or speach be decent or indecent: and verely it seems to go all by discretion, not perchaunce of euery one, but by a learned and experienced discretion, for otherwise seems the decorum to a weake and ignorant iudgement, then it doth to one of better knowledge and experience: which sheweth that it resteth in the discerning part of the minde, so as he who can make the best and most differencies of things by reasonable and wittie distinction is to be the fittest iudge or sentencer of [decencie]. Such generally is the discreetest man, particularly in any art the most skilfull and discreetest, and in all other things for the more part those that be of much obseruation and the greatest experience
>
> (AEP, p. 263).

Lear clearly epitomizes the antithesis of Puttenham's ideal adjudicator. Predictably, such an incompetent judge will pronounce an unsatisfactory decision. And in the Lear world, where civil order is ultimately the

issue, the king's mistaken rhetorical judgements tragically produce chaos.

The first two contestants in Lear's speaking competition, Goneril and Regan, know well their father's adjudicative deficiencies; and they deliver their orations with the skill and aplomb of sophists. To speak of the empty magniloquence of these two speeches is but to cite a critical commonplace of Lear scholarship. What has perhaps received less recognition, though, is the unkind presentation of the didactic material contained in these orations and the rhetorical devices used to control Lear's response. Note Goneril's rhetorical method as she delivers a glowing declaration of love and at the same time blinds Lear to the real import of her speech:

> Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;
> Dearer than eye-sight space and liberty;
> Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
> No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
> As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
> A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
> Beyond all manner of so much I love you
>
> (I.i.54-60).

The oration proves Goneril's craftsmanship: she commences with adynaton (a kind of paradoxical admission that the subject of the discourse really lies beyond expression) to advance her premise that her love for Lear surpasses speech; then, she proceeds by adopting the recognized topoi of the age to enable her to orate the immeasurability of this love. Notably, Goneril makes clever strategical use of dementiens (a hyperbolic amplification of the topic through the addition of one simile or metaphor after another--"Dearer than eyesight space and liberty . . . No less than life with grace, health, . . ") to emphasize her theme; and she cunningly employs brachylogia (lack of connectives between words, often used to simulate earnestness--"life, with grace, health, beauty, honour")

to lend credence to her ornate professions of love and so advance plausibly toward her emotive acclamatio: "Beyond all manner of so much I love you." When we recall, however, that the primary function of dementiens is to lead the auditor to the truth through a lie (hyperbole), then we comprehend Goneril's exaggerated comparisons to contain a brief lecture on the nature of love and the mediate character of language. As Goneril has calculated, though, Lear fails to penetrate her veil of flattery and misses the point. Hence, delighted at what he judges to be verbal proof of the amount of his oldest daughter's love, the king accordingly presents Goneril with a generous speaking award.

Though Regan's speech shows her to ply the rhetor's craft with considerably less finesse than her older sister, Lear is similarly indiscriminate in his reception of this second avowal of love. Perhaps for the auditors (both on and off stage) this is the more painful of the two flattering orations, since Regan's contempt of the aged monarch's rhetorical infirmities breaks through her shoddy veneer of professed love:

> I am made of that self mettle as my sister,
> And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
> I find she names my very deed of love;
> Only she comes too short: that I profess
> Myself an enemy to all other joys
> Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
> And find I am alone felicitate
> In your dear highness' love
>
> (I.i.68-74).

Regan's sentimental proclamation is really an adhortatio (a mode of speech through which the orator persuades his listener to act in accordance with the command, promise, or reasons advanced), which she brazenly deploys to procure what she deems as her merited speaking "prize": she commences her speech by asserting her equality with Goneril both in

daughterly affection and rhetorical expertise ("I am made of that self mettle as my sister") and commands her adjudicator to evaluate her as such; she continues by identifying herself with Goneril's rhetorical and emotional stance ("I find she names my very deed of love"); then, she proceeds by overtopping Goneril's profitable comparatives with quantitative absolutes to express her wholehearted devotion to Lear (Regan disclaims "all other joys/ Which the most precious square of sense professes" and asserts she is "alone felicitate" in the king's love (italics mine)). In The Garden of Eloquence, Henry Peacham speaks of the tremendous moving force of this trope and warns that "[t]he greater power that this figure hath, the more mischiefe it may worke, if it be perverted and turned to abuse."[12] Regan has exploited the trope to its utmost. Hence, by the conclusion of her compelling oration, the literal-minded Lear has not only been beguiled into believing her, but he has also been moved with "a fervent desire to performe the thing adhorted" (GE, p. 78); and Regan receives a property allotment equal to that of Goneril (I.i.81-82). Insofar, then, as it anticipates and manipulates Lear's adjudicative reactions, Regan's oration is revealed to be a mockery both of Lear's literalness and of that core of honesty that forms the basis of all linguistic utterance.

After her sisters' grandiloquence, speech itself seems tainted; and Cordelia prefers to "love and be silent." Lear attributes his youngest daughter's reticence to "speak" to her pride. Yet Cordelia's concern is with the verity of words. Rather like Montaigne, she fully realizes that the sentiments of the heart must be understood rather than heard, for "the expression of my words wrongeth my conception";[13] and since she "cannot heave [her] heart into her mouth," Cordelia refuses to

distort the experience (love) by articulating it. When Lear orders his youngest daughter to reconsider her stance ("Mend thy speech a little/ Lest it may mar thy fortunes"), however, Cordelia assents; and she delivers an oration on decorum:

> Good my Lord,
> You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
> Return these duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
> Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
> They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,
> That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
> Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
> Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
> To love my father all
>
> (I.i.94-102).

Cordelia's forthrightness about the proprieties of love and language clearly establishes her sensibleness and moral integrity. But her speech has a further significance: it shows Cordelia's rhetorical skills to be entirely compatible with her staunch honesty. Though the oration is brief, it reflects in its tripartite division, argumentation, and style some of the methods of epideictic oratory practiced from antiquity through the sixteenth century.[14] Notably, in her exordium, Cordelia commences with an accepted technique of arguing from an established belief (here, the concept of decorum) wherefrom she utters an encomium about her adjudicant's parental virtues (l. 95) and then moves quickly to assert the propriety of her behaviour toward her judge-father (ll. 96-97). Since Lear has formerly misunderstood the import of her initial profession that she loves him "according to [her] bond," Cordelia stylistically reinforces the sense of this second declaration through the use of asyndeton (a scheme similar to brachylogia in effect but particularly useful to impress details on the mind of the listener) as she elucidates

the well-known correspondences between fatherly ("begot me, bred me, loved me") and daughterly ("Obey you, love you, and most honour you") states. She proceeds in the argument (ll. 98-101) to expound this civil stance by adapting antipophora ("a figure of argument and also of amplification" in which the orator asks a question and answers it himself) to cast doubt upon the veracity of her sisters' glowing orations ("Why have my sisters husbands if they say/ They love you all?") and so emphasize the necessity of maintaining an harmony between words and deeds, or matrimonial states (ll. 99-101). Significantly, Cordelia reinforces her assertion that words do have "extra-verbal" realities[15] through employing anaphora (repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive speech units--useful to suggest proportion: "half my love with him, half my care and duty") to divulge clearly the appropriate claims of the heart. Admittedly, Cordelia in measuring love into halves is guilty of abusio. Yet, she employs the figure deliberately as a teaching device: she attempts to enlighten Lear by speaking to him in his own language. Moreover, as Puttenham points out, by "good discretion a vicious speach may go for a virtue." Hence, Cordelia's use of abusio is contextually defensible.[16] Finally, in her brief conclusion Cordelia weds words to action to achieve true eloquence as she pledges to preserve parity between her tongue and her heart (ll. 102-103).

If we consider with Aristotle that to praise or criticize someone is "akin to urging a course of action" (Rh. I.9.1367-68), then we can note in Cordelia's encomium (l. 96) and in her implied censure of her father's adjudicative reactions (ll. 98-101) an unmistakable appeal to the king to reassess the entire linguistic situation. But Lear's insensitivity to the meaning behind words prevents him from grasping her

message. Conceivably, the king is also unappreciative of her simple eloquence. Mistaking, thus, Cordelia's uncompromising truthfulness for sheer callousness, Lear responds with a grandiloquent curse (I.i.108-119); and he wrathfully disinherits his youngest daughter.

Kent's shock at Lear's disastrous actions prompts the courtier to intervene. Significantly, the royal servant begins his protest formally ("Royal Lear") and continues with a "fine Ciceronian triad" in his king's honor (I.i.139-141), until Lear's irate interruption compels Kent to discard all formal proprieties and speak bluntly in the interest of truth, as the unseemly occasion demands:[17]

> . . . be Kent unmannerly,
> When Lear is mad. What would'st thou do, old man?
> Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
> When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound
> When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state;
> And, in thy best consideration, check
> This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,
> Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
> Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
> Reverb no hollowness
>
> (I.i.144-153).

The king is equally unreceptive of Kent's attempt at rhetorical reordering as he was of Cordelia's; and the faithful courtier suffers a similar fate (banishment) for coming between the king's "sentence" and his "power."

The consequences of Lear's linguistic blight are increasingly horrific. Goneril and Regan's smooth mockeries have already reduced the monarch to a painfully grotesque figure in a speaking contest of his own making over which he has no control. Cordelia and Kent's truthful appeals have provoked the king to further irrationality and injustice. Now, moral anarchy threatens as Lear blindly hurls himself down the ladder of being in his shift from adjudicator to an auctioneer of unaccommodated

humanity. In the king's sale, the penalty for unrecognized honesty is drastic devaluation; and his onetime prized Cordelia is offered to the lowest bidder. Lear bargains with Burgundy:

> . . . What, in the least,
> Will you require in present dower with her,
> Or cease your quest of love?
> (I.i.190-192).

> When she was dear to us we did hold her so,
> But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands:
> If aught within that little-seeming substance,
> Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,
> And nothing more, may fitly like your Grace,
> She's there, and she is yours
> (I.i.195-199).

> Will you, with these infirmities she owes,
> Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
> Dower'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath,
> Take her, or leave her?
> (I.i.201-204).

Burgundy, who conceives love in terms somewhat similar to those of Lear, finds a princess whose market value has fallen a rather costly acquisition; and he withdraws his suit.

France attempts to halt this degrading bartering by calling attention to the inner worth of love and the irrelevancy of measuring it in either words or material goods:

> Love's not love
> When it is mingled with regards that stand
> Aloof from th'entire point. . . .
> [Cordelia] is herself a dowry
> (I.i.237-240).

The King of France's "point" is of course the crux of Lear's problem. Yet, though we cannot really voice nor measure inner experiences, we are not condemned to "love and be silent." Throughout the ages, we as symbol-makers have provided ourselves with a range of linguistic means

for conveying to the receptive mind and soul the quintessences (images) of metaphysical states. France thoroughly comprehends this. Hence, in his romantic declaration of love he appropriately employs the figure paradox (a philosophical and rhetorical mode using apparent self-contradictory statements to express the marvellous and/or to challenge held opinion) to place in the intellect and heart of the audience the idea or image of the depth and purity of Cordelia's being and of his love for her:

> Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;
> Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd despis'd!
> Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
> Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
> Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st
> neglect
> My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.
> Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
> Is Queen of us, of ours, of our fair France:
> Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgandy
> Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.
> Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:
> Thou losest here, a better where to find
> (I.i.249-260).

France's oxymorons are no more successful than Kent or Cordelia's plainness in enlightening Lear. The king curtly relinquishes his youngest daughter to France disgraced, unloved, and, ironically, bereft of her father's blessing of words ("benison").

Lear exits and his grotesque competition is over. But the chaos he has ignorantly generated grows rapidly. Before long, Lear learns that he can no more divide his coronet and remain king in name alone than he can split words from their referrents and be cherished solely by affectionate phrases. As Shakespeare makes clear, a flawed rhetorical outlook can only be rectified through the operation of the suasive mode

itself. And the old king's malady consigns him to a world of disenchantment, ruptured forms and speech distortions as the cure is being wrought.

CHAPTER III

RHETORICAL UNBUTTONING: THE BEGINNING OF LINGUISTIC RECONSTRUCTION

As Shakespeare has warned in the first scene of Lear, the devices and forms of language are essentially amoral and therefore susceptible to misuse. Because of its tendency to cloak its message in obscurities, the riddle is especially vulnerable to perverse usage, or to misinterpretation. Yet as Aristotle points out, the metaphorical nature of the riddle renders this trope a highly effective didactic tool, when properly used:

> Liveliness is specially conveyed by metaphor, and by the further power of surprising the hearer; because the hearer expected something different, his acquisition of the new idea impresses him all the more. His mind seems to say, 'Yes, to be sure; I never thought of that'. The liveliness of epigrammatic remarks is due to the meaning not being just what the words say: as in the saying of Stesichorus that 'the cicalas will chirp to themselves on the ground.' Well-constructed riddles are attractive for the same reason; a new idea is conveyed, and there is metaphorical expression
>
> (Rh. III.ii.1412^{a}).

Not surprisingly, the enigma with its 'veiled truths' was an indispensable instrument to that acerb wit, the court jester. In King Lear the king's Fool puts his riddling art into practice as he undertakes to enlighten Lear about his initial folly and its necessary (logically) disastrous results.

The Fool's riddles quite notably lack that pleasing wit ("attractiveness") that Aristotle attributes to a "well-constructed" enigma, for they are solely directed at his king's distressing predicament. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge emphasizes, Lear's Fool is a relentless

educator, whose words sear as they illumine:

> With Shakespeare his comic constantly re-acted on his tragic characters. Lear, wandering amidst the tempest, had all his feelings of distress increased by the overflowings of the wild wit of the Fool, as vinegar poured upon wounds exacerbates their pain.[1]

Much of the pain Lear suffers derives not so much from the effects of his Fool's "wild wit" as from his didactic methods. The Fool constantly reiterates the old king's folly--his rhetorical disordering of the state and the gross natural inversion that has ensued--in both rhyme and riddle. He can be explicit about his king's actions as when he answers Lear's irate response to the song on folly:

> Lear: When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?
> Fool: I have used it, Nuncle, e'er since thou mad'st thy daughters thy mothers; for when thou gav'st them the rod and putt'st down thine own breeches,
> [Singing]
> Then they for sudden joy did weep,
> And I for sorrow sung,
> That such a king should play bo-peep
> And go the fools among.
> Prithee, Nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy Fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie
> (I.iv.167-176).

The Fool's "lies," though, are metaphoric, for he most frequently couches his painful truths in riddles that reflect Lear's grotesque situation. Generally, the jester transmits his message through using the question-answer formula indigenous to the trope to present Lear with a compact exterior image (for instance, he introduces the image with "Dost thou know . . ." or "How now, Nuncle . . ." to which the king responds, "No lad, teach me" or "Why, my boy") which he can subsequently develop "as a biting analogy" for his royal master:[2]

> Fool: How now, Nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!
> Lear: Why, my boy?
> Fool: If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters
> (I.iv.103-107).

Shortly afterwards the fool again prods Lear about his act of division:

> Fool: Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.
> Lear: What two crowns shall they be?
> Fool: Why, after I have cut the egg i' th' middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg
> (I.iv.152-156).

The image clearly mirrors Lear's rhetorical and civil disjunctions. The Fool continues to develop this theme by extending these schismatic concerns to include the notion of inversion, which he implies is paradoxically the basis and corollary of the king's initial blunder:

> Fool: When thou clovest thy crown i' th' middle, and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away
> (I.iv.156-160).

The Fool continues in this manner to barrage Lear with a stream of equally abusive images as he gradually rends the old king's illusion apart and exposes the horrors of disorder. Probably the most foreboding riddle is that one mirroring the displaced Lear wedged awkwardly between two predatory superiors, Goneril and Regan:[3]

> Fool: . . . Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' th' middle on's face?
> Lear: No.
> Fool: Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into
> (I.v.19-23).

As the Fool's acerbic wit begins to take effect, Lear pays less attention to the riddles. He starts to brood, rather, about his own

actions ("I did her wrong . . . I will forget my nature. So kind a father!") and answers his jester with a curt "Ay, boy," "Hows that," or a single "No." His royal pupil's waning participation forces the Fool to modify his rhetorical approach. Hence, he makes his riddles more direct in their opening, briefer in form, and more frequent in presentation:

> Fool: Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?
> Lear: No.
> Fool: Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.
> Lear: Why?
> Fool: Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case
> (I.v.25-31).

Despite its brevity and provocative play on "horns" to cast suspicion on Lear's daughters' origin, the riddle fails to rouse the king from his gloomy meditations ("I will forget my nature. So kind a father"). His jester is all the more surprised, then, when Lear correctly answers the succeeding riddle ("The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason. Lear: Because they are not eight"). Significantly, this enigma belongs to that class of common, or folk riddles and is irrelevant to Lear's present situation. Despite this spark of a former wisdom, the king reverts immediately to his personal preoccupations ("To take't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!"); and he fails to hear his jester's encouraging rejoinder ("Yes indeed: Thou would'st make a good Fool."). Lear now begins to comprehend his foolishness. He realizes that he has indeed inverted natural order and, moreover, that he has been victimized by the predatory rule that he so ignorantly authorized. Hence, he becomes wholly intent upon berating himself and his two "pelican daughters." Since the Fool has now largely fulfilled his educative function, his riddling mainly ceases.

As Lear himself realizes, paradoxically, his folly can only be cured by plumbing folly's depths ("madness lies that way") and there, in madness, gaining insight. Whereas the king's madness is not the divine frenzy of the poet it is nevertheless prompted by that fundamental characteristic of man to forge a meaningful order out of the chaotic experiences of reality. Since man comprehends and arranges his world mainly through language, Lear's quest for order assumes an inherently rhetorical form. As the king begins to use words constructively, his moral vision consequently grows.[4]

Lear's earliest attempts to use language creatively can be seen in his magniloquent storm speeches. Believing his social displacement to be an act of universal injustice, the old king gives meaning to the chaotic forces of the storm by construing them as an act of supernatural vengeance instigated at his command, and which will eradicate the very seeds of life:

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
> You sulpherous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the rotundity o' th' world!
> Crack Nature's molds, all germains spill at once,
> That makes ingrateful man
> (III.ii.1-9).

As the Fool makes clear, the elements are insensible to unhoused humanity; and predictably Lear's vengeful, grandiose vision begins to crumble before the harsh realities of the relentless storm:

> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
> I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness;
> I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,

> You owe me no subscription: then let fall
> Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That will with two pernicious daughters join
> Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul
> (III.ii.14-24).

Though he commences with the imperiousness characteristic of his preceding speech, Lear's tone changes as he concedes that he is being persecuted unfeelingly by nature and his daughters alike. Hence, in his mind's eye he once more is reduced from commander to "slave" and his rhetorical construct shatters as his speech collapses in a piteous wail. Frustrated, he determines to quit the struggle and "say nothing".

Lear's resolution of silence is short lived, though, for shortly afterwards he resumes his quest for meaning. This next effort yields some progress. Though the old king still appeals to the ordering powers of the "great Gods" he enlists their aid in the meting out not of vengeance but of justice. Lear's lawcourt of the storm, moreover, will reorder society for it is constructed to dispense justice to all men; and he also will be arraigned before the bar to account for his sin:

> Let the great Gods,
> That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,
> Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
> That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
> Unwhipp'd of Justice; hide thee, thou bloody hand,
> Thou perjur'd, and thou simular of virtue
> That art incestuous; caitiff, to pieces shake,
> That under covert and convenient seeming
> Has practis'd on man's life; close pent-up guilts
> Rive your concealing continents, and cry
> These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
> More sinn'd against than sinning
> (III.ii.49-60).

Contemporaneous with Lear's ethical advancement is his

rhetorical progress. Gone are the ranting imperatives of the previous speeches ("Blow, winds . . ."; "Rumble thy bellyful. Spit, fire, . . ."). They are replaced with the hortative "Let the great Gods . . ./ Find out their enemies now" which he extends into an imaginative vision of macrocosmic ordering. Though Lear's use of language is employed for more positive means and as a result his moral outlook has widened, word-made courts in the air have little in common with experiential reality. Consequently, Lear's rhetorical artifice is again expelled by intruding reality: Kent protests, "Alack! bareheaded!/ Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;/ Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest" (III.ii.60-62); and the Fool points out that the king must indeed accept the facts of his predicament "Though the rain it raineth every day" (III.ii.77). Lear, who fears his "wits begin to turn," nonetheless acknowledges the truth of Kent and the Fool's statements and allows them to lead him to the hovel.

Accompanying Lear's fast-approaching madness, however, is the recognition, implicit in his speech of a universal justice, that he is but one of many sufferers in this pain-filled world. From this perception comes the new sense of kinship he feels for his "poor Fool" and the compassionate prayer for all wretched humanity:

> Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these? O! I have ta'en
> Too little care of this! Take physic, Pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
> And show the Heavens more just
> (III. iv .28-36).

The speech marks an important advance in Lear's moral and verbal awareness. He now realizes that social order is founded not on "large speeches" but in words rooted in active human concord and reproaches himself that in the past he has "ta'en/ Too little care of this". But Lear does not stop at self-accusation. He resolves, rather, to make restitution to his fellow sufferers by "shak[ing] the superflux to them" and so restore universal justice. Lear's rhetorical vision of a more just heaven, moreover, stems not from the disorders of the tempest but from his own bitter experience. Insofar as his ethical and aesthetic efforts reflect and are directed toward human realities, then, Lear's image of order is largely acceptable.[5]

It is quite tempting to interpret Lear's achievement in this speech as the turning point in the king's fall. But as Edgar's "Fathom and a half, fathom and a half" suggests, Lear's downward swerve is far from completion.[6] The Fool's abusive rhymes and riddles and the king's own maddening rages have brought Lear through the first stage of his ordering plunge. Now the comforting effects of his recent vision are seriously challenged when Lear meets a poor naked wretch in the flesh. Henceforth, it is Edgar, the self-styled madman, who assumes the role of educator and furthers the maddening process.

Most Lear criticism acknowledges the underlying structure of Edgar's Poor Tom speeches and their thematic relevance to the play's action. What is equally significant here, though, is the tremendous impact that Edgar's pseudo-mad rhetoric makes upon the old king. Lear's initial reaction to Edgar's almost sub-human appearance perhaps provides a clue to the kind of curative that the king's present condition demands. Lear's naively confident egalitarianism has regained for him a sense of

personal worth and identity. When he is directly confronted by the chaotic realities of human deprivation in the heart-rending figure of Poor Tom, however, the king's rhetorical image of order shatters. Horrified, he asks "Didst thou give all to thy daughters?/ And art thou come to this?" (III.iv.48-49). What is significant about the old king's query, though, is its ironic accuracy: like Lear, Edgar is a victim of equivocation. Admittedly, Lear's descent into madness is real. Conversely, Edgar's role as Poor Tom is a rhetorical maneuver designed to protect him from an ambitious brother and gullible father and yet enable him to voice his distress. Despite this, similar to Lear, Edgar has been forced beyond the pale of society to wander in the amoral and irrational wilderness of the heath. A world apart from society is at best a world of imperfect reference; one in which incoherence is really the norm.[7] Hence, though he does not set out deliberately to teach the old king as the Fool does, Edgar's apparent gibberish is well adapted to the immediate situation: it dispels comforting illusions to refract some of Lear's disquieting suspicions about human nature.[8]

In his first Poor Tom speech, Edgar's incoherencies are really a catalogue of the injustices he has suffered at the hands of Edmund and Gloucester. In it he makes effective use of parallel structure, but especially of prozeugma (the verb is expressed in the initial clause and understood in those following), to hammer out his motifs of hardship and conspiracy at the breakneck speed of mad rant:

> Who gives anything to Poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew, set ratsbane by his porridge, made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay-trotting horse over four-inch'd

> bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. . . . Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking!
> (III.iv.50-58).

Lear sees his own sad plight reflected in Edgar's speech and responds with a heartfelt curse: "Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air/ Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters" (III.iv.66-67).

Poor Tom's second speech shows a similar thematic and structural significance. Most obviously, Edgar comments on filial disobedience, Edmund's equivocations, cursing, Gloucester's fornication, and a proud confidence of outward appearances. Yet, Edgar's remarks, whether they reflect upon his own or Lear's situation, are more objectively presented than in his previous speech. Here, he moves beyond the present and particular to act as a kind of mimetic lawgiver for humanity; and he pronounces his commandments in the impressive symmetries of asyndeton:

> Take heed o' th' foul fiend. Obey thy parents; keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array
> (III.iv.78-80).

Significantly, Lear makes no immediate reference to his own situation but asks in amazement "What hast thou been?"

This tendency to transcend immediate or individual concerns reaches its height in Poor Tom's answering speech. Though Edgar's mad oration begins with references to specific acts of baseness (Oswald's foppishness and lust, Edmund's falsehoods, and Gloucester's adultery), it shortly burgeons into a general catalogue of human bestiality. Notably, this movement into abstraction is stylistically bolstered, for a definite rhetorical structure underlies Poor Toom's apparent ramblings. For instance, the speech can be divided tripartitely according to subject

matter and dominant figure: in the introduction, Edgar uses the balanced, swift-flowing cadences of isocolon as he recites particular instances of sin; in the middle section, he employs the speed and vigor of asyndeton as he ranges out to narrate man's animal traits; and in the conclusion, Edgar adopts anaphora to incorporate general humanity within the rule of his madly sane decalogue. Vickers's graphic illustration of the speech is extremely helpful in showing this structure:[9]

> A serving man, proud in heart and mind; that
> curl'd my hair,
> wore gloves in my cap,
> serv'd the lust of my mistress' heart, and
> did the act of darkness with her;
> swore as many oaths as I
> spake words, and
> broke them in the sweet face of Heaven;
> one that slept in the contriving of lust, and
> wak'd to do it.
> Wine lov'd I deeply,
> dice dearly,
> and in woman out-paramour'd the Turk:
> false of heart,
> light of ear,
> bloody of hand;
> hog in sloth,
> fox in stealth,
> wolf in greediness,
> dog in madness,
> lion in prey.
> Let not the creaking of shoes
> nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart
> to woman:
> Keep thy foot out of brothels,
> thy hand out of plackets,
> thy pen from lenders' books, and
> defy the foul fiend
> (III.iv.83-96).

What is perhaps as shocking as this painful account of the beast in man is the aura of sheer detachment of speaker from his subject that Edgar creates through his highly patterned rhetoric. Certainly the speech provokes an alarmed response from Lear. And in language which echoes

Poor Tom's rhetorical symmetries, the old king (curiously anticipating his later realization: "robes and furred gowns hide all") reinterprets Edgar's man-animal identification to suit his own preoccupations and focuses upon the paradox of civilized man's beastly trappings and unaccommodated man's sub-human existence:

> Is man no more than this? Consider him well.
> Thou ow'st the worm no silk,
> the beast no hide,
> the sheep no wool,
> the cat no perfume.
> Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated;
> thou art the thing itself; . . .
> (III.iv.100-104).

Suddenly, Lear's symmetrical comparisons yield results. For the first time, the king yolks word to fact as in pure, unadorned speech he identifies Poor Tom: "thou art the thing itself." Despite the fact that he feigns a Bedlam beggar, Edgar nonetheless is "the thing itself," for in his shivering nakedness Edgar truly represents suffering, displaced man.[10] Lear in his passion for the real hastens to tear off his kingly garments.

Behind Lear's urge to unbutton is his bitter recognition that in a fragmented universe man's life is of no more value than a beast's. The king's desire to restore order and meaning to life, however, will not allow him to accept for long this despairing vision. Soon he rebounds with renewed vigor to rage the world into order. This time, however, Lear does not attempt to forge unity out of the disparate elements of the tempest, nor does he appeal to the deities to "show" justice to the poor suffering creatures of his mind's eye. He chooses, rather, the heath's congregation of wretchedness, actual victims of the Gonerils and Regans of society, to coadjudicate his daughters' mock trial. Notably, this is

Lear's most daring use of language yet: he not only constructs his court rhetorically, but he enlists the cooperation of his community of sufférers to render that court operative:

> Lear: I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence.
> [To Edgar.] Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;
> [To the Fool.] And thou, his yolk-fellow of equity,
> Bench by his side. [To Kent.] You are o'th'commission,
> Sit you too
>
> (III.vi.35-39).

Their parts allotted, Lear's mimetic trial commences. Though the participants are wholly serious in their condemnation of Goneril and Regan, at the same time all recognize the arraignment as but a play of words. Moreover, as the king and his Fool acknowledge from the outset of the proceedings their artifice is flawed, for there is an obvious discrepancy "between symbol and fact".[11]

> Fool: Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?
> Lear: She cannot deny it.
> Fool: Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.
> Lear: And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim
> What store her heart is made on
>
> (III.vi.46-53).

Lear's grimly humorous confession grows into an admission that his fiction cannot really stand firm when confronted with an existing chaos. He realizes that, despite his enactment of justice, civil corruption still prevails. Since in actuality Goneril and Regan yet evade sentence, the old king engineers an imaginative escape:

> Stop her there!
> Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!
> False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?
>
> (III.vi.53-55).

Previously, Lear's visions of order have been dissipated by antithetic external intruders (the relentless storm or Poor Tom). Hence, his

deliberate shattering of the mock trial represents a considerable advance in Lear's moral and rhetorical awareness. By introducing the actuality of chaos to dispel his image of justice, the king has mirrored reality truthfully and so maintained the harmony between words and deeds, or referrents, that underlies the Humanist theory of life and language.

Moreover, in his visionary madness Lear now begins to discern counterfeiting. He perceives that Edgar's insanity is not real but a "garment" and remarks ironically:

> You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian; but let them be changed
>
> (III.vi.77-80).

Exhausted, Lear resolves to "Take supper i'th' morning" and so retires to rest. Since Edgar has now fulfilled his educative role, he parts from the king and shortly afterward assumes the care of Gloucester. The Fool also has completed his teaching duties and disappears from the action with a bawdy "I'll go to bed at noon." His jest, though, is double edged, for it reflects the blurring of forms and formalities that will continue for some time to dominate Lear's pertinently mad world. Though the king also retires from the scene and journeys to Dover, his quest for universal order presumably remains foremost in his mind. Significantly, he returns to challenge Edgar's poetic lie in the suicide episode at the Dover Cliffs.

CHAPTER IV

"NATURE'S ABOVE ART": FALSE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTS DEMOLISHED AND TOWARD A RHETORIC OF TRUTH

If we acknowledge that one of the dominant preoccupations in King Lear is the nature and use of rhetoric, then perhaps we can recognize Edgar's virtuosity in manipulating Gloucester's suicide attempt as the culmination of Shakespeare's comments on the art of language. Though it is really beyond the scope of this study to come to grips with the subtleties of audience response, this scene demands that we at least acknowledge the playwright's relationship to his work. An analysis of the incident at the Cliffs of Dover reveals it to be more than just a paradigm of verbal artifice: it is here that Shakespeare moves beyond the confines of his verbal medium to verify to us his own ethical and aesthetic stance.

Before discussing Edgar's artifice at Dover, it is important to recollect briefly his catalogue of human evil in III.iv.79-82; 84-97. As his peculiar decalogue and self-flagellation divulge,[1] Edgar believes both in a universal ordering power ("the sweet face of heaven") and in the actuality of social morality, despite the beast in man. He views his sufferings, moreover, as the wages of sin. When he again meets his father on the heath, Gloucester has been blinded for his loyalty to Lear. Like his king, the Duke also invokes the aid of the deities, "Give me some help! O cruel! O you Gods!" (III.vii.68). But the Gods do not intervene to restore justice, and Gloucester similarly is "thrust out at gates, . . . [to] smell/ His way to Dover" (III.vii.91-92). The Duke consequently loses all faith in a morally governed universe ("As flies to

wanton boys, are we to th' Gods;/ They kill us for their sport" (IV.i.35-36)); and he determines to alleviate his sufferings by committing suicide. Although King Lear is not an overtly Christian drama, Gloucester's despair and contemplated act are unacceptable by Edgar's "proto-Christian standards." Hence, he employs all his rhetorical skill to prevent the suicide by construing a miracle that will revive his father's faith and convince him that disorder and suffering are part of the divine plan and must be stoically endured.[2]

Edgar's illusion not only displays the tremendous powers of persuasive language, but it excites both pleasure and fear as out of nothing (a bare stage) he creates both a physical and metaphysical landscape.

> Glou.: When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?
> Edgar: You do climb up it now; look how we labour.
> Glou.: Methinks the ground is even.
> Edgar: Horrible steep:
> Hark! do you hear the sea?
> Glou.: No, truly.
> Edgar: Why, then your other senses grow imperfect
> By your eyes' anguish.
> Glou.: So may it be, indeed.
>
> . . .
>
> Edgar: Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still.
> How fearful
> And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
> The crows and choughs that wind the midway air
> Show scarce so gross as beetles; half way down
> Hangs one that gathers sampire, dreadful trade!
> Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
> The fishermen that walk upon the beach
> Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring bark
> Diminish'd to her cock, her cock a buoy
> Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
> That on th' unnumber'd idle pebble chafes,
> Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
> Lest my brain turn, and deficient sight
> Topple down headlong
> (IV.vi.1-6; 11-24).

The speech is a tremendously forceful hypotyposis (a figure that describes something so vividly that it seems to materialize before the eyes of the audience). Edgar's three-dimensional description of land, sea, and space comes to life as our inner ear vibrates with the assonantal ebb and flow of the "murmuring surge/ That on th' unnumber'd idle pebble chafes". Lest the startling immediacy of the scene tempt us to believe in the substantiality of words, Edgar's apologetic aside ("Why I do trifle thus with his despair/ Is done to cure it" (IV.vi.33)) reminds us of the distinctions between fact and fiction. Hence, as we watch Edgar expand his verbal illusion into the supernatural realm, we begin to make moral judgments about his use of the suasive mode.

As he revives Gloucester from his supposed fall from the cliff, Edgar exchanges his guise of Bedlam beggar for that of a simple rustic. Then, he adopts prosopopeia to fabricate the circumstances of the Duke's survival by weaving a fabula of metaphysical conflict wherein he represents Poor Tom as a fiend who seeks Gloucester's despairing soul, but who is preempted by the actions of beneficent deities:[3]

> Edgar: This is above all strangeness.
> Upon the crown o' th' cliff what thing was that
> Which parted from you?
> Glou.: A poor unfortunate beggar.
> Edgar: As I stood here below methought his eyes
> Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
> Horns whelk'd and wav'd like the enridged sea:
> It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,
> Think that the clearest Gods, who make them honours
> Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee
> (IV.vi.67-74).

Thus Gloucester is persuaded of Poor Tom's evil nature and accepts Edgar's illusion of a morally ordered life as truth. He resolves "henceforth [to] bear/ Affliction till it do cry out itself 'Enough,

enough,' and die" (IV.vi.75-77).

Despite the ethical motive underlying Edgar's actions, we cannot accept the means by which he has restored Gloucester's confidence in the "clearest Gods." Our awareness of the falsity of the entire situation undercuts the tragic sincerity of Gloucester's renunciation of "this world" and renders his "fall" to death an appallingly grotesque charade. Admittedly, the Duke's respite from despair is real; nevertheless, this also is the result of rhetorical contrivance. Hence, we are compelled to reject Edgar's vulgar, utilitarian aesthetics as compromising both his father's integrity and his own honesty.[4]

Shakespeare himself substantiates our dissatisfaction with such artifice, for he counters Edgar's select vision of a controlled moral universe with its corporal antithesis. Lear, decked in nature's predatory weeds,[5] comes raging into the scene claiming that he cannot be accused of counterfeiting either coins or kingship; and we are confronted henceforth with a heartrending montage of the king's sufferings and insights into "how this world goes." Significantly, Lear's reflections from his experiences of the world constitute a parody (though he is unaware of it) of Edgar's confident scene painting. The king in his agon becomes obsessed with one after another metaphysical concept; and in his self-debates he vacillates between the extremes of merciful magnanimity and self-indulgent cynicism in a manner that is strikingly reminiscent of Gloucester's fictive wavering between the "fiends" of hell and the "clearest Gods" atop the Dover Cliffs.

We see Lear first acting out his kingly role as he pays his conscripted soldiers, trains his archers, shows kindness to the creatures of his realm (the mouse), and undauntedly challenges the most gigantic of

foes (evil?). Suddenly the enemy becomes defined as Lear recalls the viciousness of a serpent tongue and the brute suffering that flattery inflicted:

> Ha! Goneril with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say 'ay' and 'no' to every thing that I said! 'Ay' and 'no' too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was every thing; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof
> (IV.vi.96-105).

Though it ends somewhat cynically, certainly this is Lear's most comprehensive statement yet about his own situation. But insofar as the speech touches generally upon the evils of using rhetoric indiscriminately to build pleasing illusions, it reflects upon Edgar's recent artifice.

Lear's divided-self becomes more obvious in his "every inch a king" speech. He begins with a compassionate, though distorted, moral authority to absolve his subjects from their sins:

> I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
> Adultery?
> Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:
> The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
> Does lecher in my sight.
> Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
> Was kinder to his father than my daughters
> Got 'tween the lawful sheets
> (IV.vi.109-116).

Soon Lear's discovery of sexual lust in the "simp'ring dame . . . That minces virtue" explodes into a repulsion from the human body. He images a microcosm which seems to parody Edgar's vertically arranged cosmos, with mankind torn between the "Gods" and the "fiends."[6] In Lear's little world of man, though, the torso of the female body is the residence of the Gods and all beneath the waist is hell; and it is the horrors of hell

that obsess the king:

> But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,
> Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness,
> There is the sulphurous pit--burning, scalding,
> Stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!
> Give me an ounce of civit, good apothecary,
> To sweeten my imagination
>
> (IV.vi.125-130).

Lear's authoritative mercy now dissolved into cynical disgust, he vows defiantly "I'll not love."

Edgar's rhetorical construct is countered further as Lear admonishes Gloucester to "Look with thine ears" and proceeds in his great "image of authority" speech to sketch the injustice, lechery, and predacity that are the monstrous issue of a brutally competitive policy such as Edmund ("Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law/ My services are bound . . ." (I.i.1-22)), and Goneril and Regan uphold:

> . . . behold
> The great image of Authority:
> A dog's obey'd in office.
> Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
> Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
> Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
> For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
> Thorough tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
> Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
> Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
> None does offend, none, I say none; I'll able 'em
>
> (IV.vi.155-166).

As he becomes enraged at the fabrications and artificial decorum upon which this bestial society thrives, Lear lashes out at its false justicers; and he concludes his panorama of vice in a frenzy of revenge:

> Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
> To seal th' accusers lips. Get thee glass eyes;
> And, like a scurvy politician, seem
> To see the things thou dost not
> (IV.vi.167-170).

> And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
> Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!
> (IV.vi.184-185).

When Lear counsels Gloucester to have patience and bear the adversities of this life, then, his advice stems not from a belief that suffering will ultimately gain divine reward but from the bitterness of experience. Suffering, the king maintains, is a condition of human life, for "the first time that we smell the air/ We wawl and cry" (IV.vi.177-178).

This, then, is what Lear has learned in the dwellings of man and on the wilderness of the heath: that a predatory force lodges within the human self and ever threatens to destroy the values of civil existence, and that beyond society there exists an amoral, senseless nature, which, like the torrential rains of the heath, cares not whose head it pelts. In short, for Lear, life equals strife. It is those very aspects of experience that Edgar's verbal illusion of an ultimately secure, divinely governed life and his counsel of passive forbearance preclude. As Shakespeare makes clear, though, the art of rhetoric must communicate all aspects of existence, negative as well as affirmative. Hence, regardless of his noble motives, Edgar's poetic lie is ethically and aesthetically inadmissible. His rhetorical construct does not "hold the mirror up to nature," and the playwright shatters it in nature's face. As Lear says, "Nature's above art in that respect."

Soon after this incident at the cliffs, Lear is taken to Cordelia's camp. It is there that the king finds both his self-identity

and the order in life that he sought when he contested the elements and railed at the world's villains. Significantly, Cordelia's camp is founded upon the milk of human concord that Lear banished when he disinherited her for defining love for him, and which in his agon he came to recognize as the ordering force of society. The king has advanced considerably in mental and moral awareness since the tragic speaking contest. Hence, though he fails to recognize his youngest daughter when he awakens in her camp, he discerns in her that sincere concern for others that is the basis of humanity; and he kneels to her on the strength of this alone. Cordelia, in turn, raises Lear to request his blessing; and thus the bonds of human love and fellowship are reforged. It is now, secure in the order of human love, that Lear can fulfil his quest for self-definition ("Who is it that can tell me who I am?") that began when the king bowed to flattery. He articulates his identity with a directness that divulges an uncompromising truthfulness of expression:

> I am a very foolish fond old man,
> Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less;
> And, to deal plainly,
> I fear I am not in my perfect mind
> (IV.vii.60-63).

Lear's new sense of the harmony between words and their referrents expands as he defines Cordelia both in moral and paternal terms:

> . . . as I am a man, I think <u>this lady</u>
> To be <u>my child</u> Cordelia
> (IV.vii.68-69; <u>italics</u> mine).

With Cordelia's affirmative "And so I am, I am" and her ready forgiveness of his former mistakes "no cause, no cause" Lear's civil (moral and linguistic) reintegration is complete.

Though the perfect vision of peace and order that Shakespeare

presents through the reunion of Lear and Cordelia is founded on the experience of love, hers is a select environment and representative only of a singular aspect of the society that is the play's (and by implication our) reality. Notably, Cordelia's unified society of words and deeds relies on martial strength for its survival. Outside the limits of her camp the lying, predatory rule of Goneril and Regan still flourishes; and the relentless flux surges on regardless of the naked wretches of the world. Moreover, though our own aesthetic instincts lean toward a flourishing moral order and we prescribe a code of ethics toward this end, life nonetheless retains its element of chance. Hence, when Cordelia's force is conquered by a stroke of ill-fortune, Shakespeare again validates his "word-maker's" pledge. Cordelia suggests this when she counsels her father after they have been taken captive:

> We are not the first
> Who, with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.
> For thee, oppressed King, I am cast down;
> Myself could else out-frown false Fortune's frown.
> Shall we not see these daughters and sisters
> (V.iii.4-7).

Lear is loath to relinquish his new-found peace and to acknowledge the bestial elements within his own family as well as in the kingdom at large. Hence, he formulates a world secluded from the responsibilities and realities of life and where he and Cordelia can laugh, talk, and love undisturbed:

> No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison;
> We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
> And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;

> And take upon's the mystery of things,
> As if we were Gods' spies: and we'll wear out,
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
> That ebb and flow by th' moon
>
> (V.ii.8-18).

> Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
> The Gods themselves throw incense
>
> (V.ii.20-21).

But the king's paradise in a birdcage is doomed from the outset. As the experiences of the heath have proven, man must remain tied to the social order if he is to function coherently and truthfully. Soon after imprisonment, Lear's idyll is smashed as Cordelia is murdered at the hands of the enemy.

Before Lear appears carrying his dead daughter, a flurry of action ensues as the play's community attempts to restore the positive world order that Cordelia's murder seems to us to belie.[7] Edgar disguises himself, challenges Edmund to a fencing match, kills his bastard brother, and claims the outcome as an act of divine justice:

> I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
> If more, the more th' hast wrong'd me.
> My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
> The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us;
> The dark and vicious place where he thee got
> Cost him his eyes
>
> (V.iii.166-171).

Decorum might be justly served in the instance of the combat. Edgar's pronouncement that Gloucester's blinding was an act of divine retribution punishing his adultery, however, does not wholly concur with fact. Though Edmund betrayed his father, the more direct cause of the Duke's loss of eyesight was his deliberate moral choice to defend his king's life even if he had to forfeit his own (III.iii.17-20). Albany is guilty of a

similar verbal discrepancy when he attributes the deaths of Goneril and Regan to a "judgment of the heavens" (V.iii.230) when he formerly held that divine intervention would prevent humanity from preying upon itself "like monsters of the deep" (IV.ii.51). Even Edmund, moved by what he mistakenly believes as proof that he also was "beloved", in his dying moments attempts to reorder the surrounding chaos and rescinds his death sentence of Lear and Cordelia. But he is too late. No doubt Edgar, Albany, and Edmund are sincere in their attempts to affirm an ordered reality. Yet, somewhat like Lear's word-court of the storm and Edgar's scenic illusion at Dover Cliffs, these latest efforts also are based on untruths--namely, self-deception. And as Shakespeare once again makes clear when he confronts us with the mourning Lear, society cannot be reordered through lies, no matter how noble the motive or how comforting the illusion.

King Lear, I have suggested, is a play about words. Hence, when Lear enters carrying his murdered Cordelia, Shakespeare makes words bear the brunt. Much of Lear's agon has been a wrestling with words. If the king's madness has allowed him a glimpse of universal truths, then his struggle has also taught him the nature and function of language. Though Lear knows there are experiences that cannot be measured or accurately voiced, he also knows that he has a responsibility to voice his feelings about the death of this one daughter who might have "redeem[ed] nature from the general curse" (IV.vi.203). Lear does not abdicate now from speech as he once did from his kingly duties. In three painful monosyllables, he protests the haphazardness of life that tolerates the atrocity of Cordelia's death:

Howl, howl, howl!
(V.iii.256).

The king's outrage grows; and he urges his onlookers to join him in a general outcry/against the uncertainties and sufferings that largely constitute man's lot in life:

O, you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack
(V.iii.256-258).

Albany and Edgar's secure preconceptions of a rationally determined moral existence dissolve in the face of this present dismay. Even Kent, whose entire life has been sacrificed to the restoration of order, is driven to question his most innate convictions:

Kent: Is this the promis'd end?
Edgar: Or image of that horror?
Albany: Fall and cease
(V.iii.262-264).

Though this is perhaps Shakespeare's most painful recognition of the disordered, unpredictable world that we inhabit, it is neither his nor Lear's final word on the matter. Lear has experienced too much that is affirmative in life to shirk this ultimate encounter with reality. Hence, he absolutely refuses to accept this most crushing of blows as evidence of an absurd, meaningless existence. Though the amoral life-flux makes no distinction between man and beast, Lear is convinced of humanity's worth. He dies upholding the moral order which he glimpsed in Cordelia's little realm of love and truth and asserting man's superiority over the beasts:

> And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never
> (V.iii.304-307).

Lear's last words are an imperative that we consider well the implications of the situation:

> Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips,
> Look there, look there!
> (V.iii.308-309).

We listen, we look, and, like Lear, we protest that the lips of truth should ever be silenced.

Shakespeare, then, in King Lear has offered us a terrifying, unflinching image of the disordered reality that we call life. He has allowed us no recourse to facile theories of existence, for he has demolished all rhetorical constructs that sought to mitigate the harshness of life by deception. From the first moments of Lear's tragic speaking contest, the playwright has never allowed us to forget the havoc that words can wreak when construed ignorantly or malevolently. Yet, unlike Socrates in Gorgias and Phaedrus, Shakespeare has affirmed the tremendous ordering power of words in the world of experience. This is clearly perceptible in the playwright's own use of rhetoric to destroy illusions and in Lear's constant strife with words to gain understanding. It is this affirmation of the positive function of rhetoric that I believe underlies Edgar's maxim to "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (V.iii.323).

By the play's end, Edgar has advanced considerably since he

uttered to Gloucester and Edmund his simplistic moral explanations of the causal relationship between good and evil in the divine plan for the universe. During Lear's final agon at Cordelia's death, Edgar begins to perceive what Humanist theory in general acknowledges: mentally and linguistically, man is limited. We are not "Gods' spies." We can no more lay bare the workings of the human mind and spirit than we can explain away the mysteries of the universe. At best, we can attempt to discern and verbally correct man's shortcomings. Such knowledge, though, is not to be underrated as the Decalogue makes quite clear. But commandments are rules. They offer us no certainty in life, only a minimum prescription for survival, as Cordelia's tragic death makes clear.[8] Yet, though life is partly a matter of chance, it is also a matter of prudence. To realize this is perhaps to attain maturity. If order is to prevail at all in the human sphere, then we must approach life with that unflinching honesty and sagacity that Shakespeare demands. As Lear finds out, ignorance can be cured and words set aright, but once spoken words cannot be unsaid; and the tragic results of words spoken in ignorance cannot always be averted. Shakespeare is right: "Ripeness is all." We must obey the weight of these sad times, else without the decorums of life and language we might all degenerate into spiritual Calibans.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]William Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, in The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare, ed., Sylvan Barnet (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1963).
*All quotations from Shakespeare's plays with the exception of King Lear are from this edition and will be noted henceforth within the paper.

[2]Thomas Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique (London: 1560), ed., G. H. Mair (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909). See "The Epistle," sig. lii.
*All quotations from Wilson's Arte are from this edition and will be cited hereafter in the paper as AR.

[3]John Weever in The Mirror of Martyrs (1601) alludes to the audience appreciation of the Brutus-Mark Antony oratorical contest in Julius Caesar:

> The many-headed multitude were drawn
> By Brutus' speech that Caesar was ambitious.
> When eloquent Mark Antony had shown
> His virtues, who but Brutus was then vicious.

Admittedly, Weever represents the well-schooled auditor. Yet, Alfred Harbage in Shakespeare's Audience (1941; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 146, shows that the apprentices and artisans received the equivalent of a Grammar school education. Since the craftsmen comprised a large segment of the audience, it seems logical to infer that the playgoers in general were alert to the implications of rhetoric in Tro. and other plays.

[4]Plato, Gorgias, in The Dialogues of Plato, 3rd ed., trans. B. Jowett (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), I.
*All quotations from Plato's Dialogues are from this edition and will be noted henceforth within the paper.

[5]Aristotle, Rhetoric, in The Works of Aristotle, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, XI (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924).
*All references to Aristotle's Rhetoric are from this edition and will be noted hereafter in the paper as Rh.

[6]Friedrich Solmsen, "Notes on Aristotle's Rhetoric" in The Province of Rhetoric, ed., Joseph Schwartz and John A. Rycenga (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1965), pp. 131-34.

[7]T. McAlindon, Shakespeare and Decorum (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1973), p. 3.

[8]McAlindon, pp. 4-6.

[9]Thomas Nashe, quoted in McAlindon, p. 6.

[10]George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie (London: Richard Field, 1589), ed., A. Walker and G. D. Willcock (Cambridge: University Press, 1936), p. 276.
*All quotations from Puttenham are from this edition and will be acknowledged henceforth in the paper as AEP.

[11]Puttenham, introd., p. lviii.

[12]See McAlindon, p. 15.

[13]McAlindon, p. 16.

[14]Wolfgang Clemen, A Commentary on Shakespeare's "Richard III," trans. Jean Bonheim (London: 1968), pp. 226-27; quoted in Robert Y. Turner, Shakespeare's Apprenticeship (Chicago: University Press, 1974), p. 73.

[15]William Shakespeare, King Lear, ed., Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1972). All quotations from Lear are from The Arden Shakespeare and will be noted hereafter in the paper.

Chapter II

[1]Ben Jonson, Volpone in Works (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), ed., C. H. Hereford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, V, pp. 23-24.

[2]John Dennis, An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare (1712), Letter I, quoted in Arthur M. Eastman, A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 10.

[3]Christopher Spencer, ed., Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare (Urbana; 1965), pp. 201-74.

[4]Samuel Johnson, Preface, The Plays of William Shakespeare (1765).

[5]A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, 2nd ed. (1904; London: MacMillan), p. 285.

[6]O. J. Campbell, "The Salvation of Lear," ELH 15 (1948), p. 107.

[7]John Reibetanz, The "Lear" World: A Study of "King Lear" in its Dramatic Context (Toronto: University Press, 1977). See Chapter I for an excellent discussion of the relationship between the morality play and King Lear.

[8]Sigurd Burkhardt, Shakespearean Meanings (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 259.

[9]Ifor Evans, The Language of Shakespeare's Plays, 3rd ed. (1952; London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., rpt., 1966), p. 178; William Frost, "Shakespeare's Rituals and the Opening of King Lear," Hudson Review, X (Winter, 1957-58), p. 581.

[10]Professor H. A. Hargreaves drew my attention to the impropriety of Lear's concept of the crawler toward death. Certainly the image is strikingly antithetical to the later "ripeness" of the "foolish fond old man."

[11]See Appendix for further material on rhetorical tropes and figures.

[12]Henry Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence (London, 1577), p. 78.

[13]Michel de Montaigne, Essays, I, 310-20, quoted in Emily W. Leider, "Plainness of Style in King Lear," SQ 21 (1970), p. 49.

[14]See particularly [Cicero] Rhetorica ad Herennium, trans. Harry Caplan (Loeb, Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 179 regarding the omission of the Narration (statement of facts) in epideictic oratory.

[15]Burkhardt, p. 239.

[16]Though Puttenham modifies this statement by giving an account of those devices that can never be considered positively, he does not mention abusio by name, only incongruities. The point is perhaps theoretically disputable.

[17]Rosalie L. Colie, "The Energies of Endurance: Biblical Echo in King Lear," in Some Facets of "King Lear": Essays in Prismatic Criticism, ed., Rosalie L. Colie and F. T. Flahiff (Toronto: University Press, 1974), p. 127.

Chapter III

[1]Coleridge, quoted in Brian Vickers, The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 361.

[2]Vickers, pp. 361-62. I am very heavily indebted to Chapter 8 of Vickers' book in my discussion of both the Fool's use of riddles and the rhetorical mode of Edgar's Poor Tom speeches.

[3]Vickers, p. 362.

[4]Robert Egan, Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of his Art in "King Lear," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 34. Though he focuses on Shakespeare's growing awareness of the dramatist's art, Egan's chapter on King Lear is extremely relevant to my investigation of Shakespeare's rhetorical concerns and has influenced me considerably.

[5]Egan, pp. 39-40.

[6]Burkhardt, p. 248.

[7]Sheldon P. Zitner, "King Lear and Its Language" in Some Facets of "King Lear": Essays in Prismatic Criticism, ed., Rosalie L. Colie and F. T. Flahiff (Toronto: University Press, 1974), p. 17.

[8]Vickers, p. 368.

[9]Since I really cannot improve upon Vickers' excellent graphic patterns, I have adopted these here and in Lear's reply. See pp. 366-67.

[10]Egan also makes this point, see his p. 41. See, also, H. A. Hargreaves, "Visual Contradiction in King Lear," SQ 21 (1970), p. 493.

[11]Egan, pp. 43-44.

Chapter IV

[1]See Zitner's article regarding Edgar's self-flagellation.

[2]Egan, p. 25.

[3]Egan sees this as a morality play with Gloucester as an Everyman torn between opposing forces and Edgar "doubling as Vice and Chorus," p. 23. The suggestion is extremely interesting. On the other hand, Shakespeare uses fabula which clearly places the incident in the realm of story-telling.

[4]Egan, p. 26.

[5]See the discussion of Lear's wildflowers and their relationship to other predatory life forms in Egan, pp. 28-29.

[6]Egan, p. 27.

[7]See Egan, pp. 51-54. Since at this point in Lear Shakespeare's aesthetic and rhetorical concerns converge, I have made extensive use of Egan's scholarship in my analysis of the play's final scene.

[8]Rosalie L. Colie, pp. 135-37.

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APPENDIX OF RHETORICAL TERMS[1]

Abusio (Catachresis):

[Cicero] Ad Herennium (IV.45)
The inexact use of a like and kindred word in place of the precise and proper one.

Susenbrotus (10)
Trope. The practice of adapting the nearest available term to describe something for which no proper term exists. . . . Therefore it differs from a metaphor which changes the proper term into an other one.

Puttenham (p. 180)
[I]f for lacke of naturall and proper terme or worde we take another, neither naturall nor proper and do vntruly apply it to the thing which we would seem to express, and without any iust inconuenience . . . .

Hoskins (II)
More desperate than a metaphor. It is the expressing of one matter by the name of another which is incompatible with it, and sometimes clean contrary.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (180)
I lent my love to losse, . . . lent is properly of mony or some such other thing . . . and being applied to loue is utterly abused.

Acclamatio (Epiphonema):

Quintillian (VIII.v.II)
Listed under sententia. An exclamation attached to the close of a statement or proof by way of climax.

Erasmus (82)
For plenitude of thought. A climax in the form of an exclamation at the end of a narrative or proof.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (217)

> What medicine then, can such disease remoue,
> Where loue breeds hate, and hate engenders loue.

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[1]Though it covers only those rhetorical devices discussed in the thesis, my appendix generally follows Lee A. Sonnino's Handbook to Sixteenth Century Rhetoric in format and in the main selection of definitions and examples.

Adhortatio (Protrope):

Peacham (77f)
Form of speech by which the orator exhorteth and persuadeth his hearers to do something . . . not only a form of a commandment or of a promise . . . but also gives reasons.

EXAMPLES:

Peacham (78)
If ever God had respect to a just cause, or ever gave victory where it was due, or ever lent his hand to equity against tyranny, or ever preferred his people, and confounded his enemies, he will this day fight with us, and for us, and give us a glorious victory, be our enemies never so many, and we never so few, and therefore shew yourselves this day valiant, courageous and constant, fight this day for your honour, and for your country, cast off this day all fear that may make you weak and arm yourselves with hope that may make you strong.

Shakespeare (Measure for Measure)
An adhortatio comprised of threats:

> Seeming, seeming!
> I will proclaim thee, Angelo; look for 't:
> Sign me a present pardon for my brother,
> Or with an outstretch'd throat I'll tell the world aloud
> What man thou art
>
> (II.iv.149-152).

See also: Richard III (V.iii), battle orations.
King Lear (I.i.69-76), Regan's love oration.

Adynaton:

Melancthon (Elementorum, 44ff)
Scheme. A kind of paradox [the figure by which we admit that our message is beyond the power of words to convey].

EXAMPLE:

Melancthon (44f)
Words cannot convey how much your letters have delighted me.

Anaphora (Repetitio):

Cicero (De Oratore, III.liv.206)
Scheme. The same word may be repeated at the beginning of a sentence.

Puttenham (198)
Figure of Repetition generally:
And first of all others your figure that worketh by iteration or repetition of one word or clause doth much alter and affect the eare and also the mynde of the hearer, and therefore is counted a very braue figure with the Poets and rhetoricians and this repetition may be in seuen sortes.
Anaphora When we make one word begin . . . and, lead the daunce to many verses in site.

EXAMPLES:

Puttenham (198)

> To thinke on death it is a miserie,
> To thinke on life it is a vanitie:
> To thinke on the world verily it is,
> To thinke that heare man hath no perfit blisse.

Hoskins (13)

> You whom my choice hath made the gods of my safety,
> you that nature made the lodestar of comfort.

Antipophora (Rogatio):

Quintillian (IX.ii.15)
Scheme. To ask a question and not to wait for a reply, but to subjoin the reply at once yourself.

Puttenham (204)
[W]hen we will seeme to aske a question to th'intent we will answer it our selues, and is a figure of argument and also of amplification.

Peacham (107f)
Scheme. The orator answereth to his own demand.

EXAMPLES:

Peacham (107f)
Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? against whom hast thou lifted up thy voice, and exalted proud looks? Even against the holy ghost.

Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.

Asyndeton (Dissolutio):

Quintillian (IX.iii.50)
Scheme. The absence of connecting particles. The figure is useful when we are speaking with special vigour: for it at once impresses the details on the mind and makes them seem more numerous than they really are.

Puttenham (175)
[I]t is a figure wants good band or coupling, and . . . doth not a litle alter th'eare . . . It is a figure to be used when we will seeme to make haste, or to be earnest.

Hoskins (38)
Where substantive to substantive or word to word are joined . . . where many ands are spared. . . . It fits well the even phrases and interpretations of an eloquent tongue that seems . . . to contain many parts . . . which stick in the hearer's senses.

EXAMPLES:

Wilson (205)
Obey the king, fear his laws, keep thy vocation, do right, seek rest, like well a little, use all men, as thou wouldst they should use thee.

Puttenham (175)
Pro Rege, pro lege, pro grege,
For the king, for the commons, for the countrey lavves.

Bomphiologia:

Sherry (Dvii)
Scheme. Verborum bombus. When small and trifling things are set out with great gazing words.

Puttenham (259f)
Vice. Such bombasted words as seem altogether forced full of wind, being a great deal too high and lofty for the matter.

EXAMPLE:

Sherry (Dvii)
Terence's boasting soldier.

Brachylogia (Articulus):

Ad Herennium (IV.26)
Scheme. When the intervals between single words in staccato speech are distinguished by pauses or commas.

Puttenham (213)
Scheme. [T]o proceede all by single words, without any close or coupling, sauing that a little pause or comma is geuen to every word.

Peacham (57)
Scheme. Setteth one word from another by cutting the oration with commas . . . for brevity, . . . convenient to express any vehement affections.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (213)
Envy, malice, flattery, disdain.

Cacemphaton:

Puttenham (253f)
Vice. [W]hen we use such wordes as may be drawen to a foule and vnshamefast sence.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (254)

Iape with me but hurt me not
Bourde vvith me but shame me not.

Cacozelia:

Puttenham (251f)
Vice. [W]hen we affect new words and phrases other than the good speakers and writers in any language, or then custome hath allowed, . . . to coigne fine wordes out of the Latin, and to use new fangled speeches.

Dementiens (Hyperbole):
also known as superlatio, audacia

Quintillian (VIII.vi.67ff)
Trope. An elegant straining of the truth which may be employed either for exaggeration or attenuation. . . . We may say more than the actual facts. . . . We may exalt our theme by the use of simile . . . or by the introduction of comparison . . . or by metaphor . . . one hyperbole may be heightened by the addition of another . . . Hyperbole lies without any intention to deceive. . . . When the magnitude of the fact passes all words our language will be more effective if it goes beyond truth rather than falls short of it.

Hoskins (29)
Means of amplificatio. Some times it expresseth a thing to the highest degree of possibility beyond the truth, that it descending thence may find the truth; sometimes in flat impossibility, that rather you may conceive the unspeakableness than the untruth of the relation.

EXAMPLE:

Hoskins (29)
Accustomed to use victory as an inheritance.

Though a thousand deaths followed, and every death followed with a hundred shames.

Beyond the bounds of conceit, much more of uttering.

Hypotyposis (Demonstratio):

Ad Herennium (IV.68)
This figure so explains things with words that we apprehend them as though before our eyes. We bring this about by describing what the thing has done, does, and will do, the circumstances and consequences of its existence.

Puttenham (238)
Scheme. [T]o describe and set foorth many things in such sort as it should appeare they were truly before our eyes . . . if the things . . . be not naturall or not veritable, the same axeth more cunning to do it, because to faine a thing that neuer was nor is like to be, proceedeth of a greater wit and sharper inuention than to describe things that be true.

EXAMPLE:

Wilson (178)
If our enemies shall invade, and by treason win victory, we shall all die . . . and our city shall be destroyed stick and stone. I see our children made slaves, our daughters ravished, our wives carried away, the father forced to kill his own son, the mother her daughter . . . the suckling child slain in the mother's bosom, one standing to the knees in another's blood, churches spoiled, houses plucked down, and all set in fire around us.

Shakespeare: see Henry V (III.iii.1-43). Henry's speech is reminiscent of Wilson's example above.

Fabula (Mythos):

Hoskins (10)
A form of similitude . . . a poet's tale, acted for the most part, by gods and men.

EXAMPLE:

Hoskins (10)
Let Spenser tell you a tale of a Faery Queen . . . then it is a poet's tale.

Paradoxon (Inopinatum):

Peacham (112)
Scheme. The orator affirmeth something to be true by saying that he would not have believed it, . . . it is so strange, so great, or so wonderful.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (225f)

> For what the waves could never wash away
> This proper youth has wasted in a day.

Parison (Compar):
Also known as isocolon.

Scaliger (IV.xxxix)
Scheme. In this figure the sections of a passage are balanced by words or sounds always equal in number and length. Used well it is a great virtue of style, badly it may become a vice.

Puttenham (214)
Scheme. [I]t goeth by clauses of egall quantitie, and not very long. . . . They give good grace to a dittie, but specially to a prose.

EXAMPLE:

Peacham (59)
He left the city garnished, that the same might be a monument of victory, of clemency, of continency, that men might see what he had conquered, what he spared, what he had left.
The ox hath known his owner, and the ass his masters crib.

Periergia:

Peacham (1577,Giii^{v})
Vice. When in small matter, there is too much labour bestowed, and too many words and figures used . . . [to] take greater care to paint . . . speech with fine words, than to express truth plainly.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham

> The tenth of March when Aries received
> Dan Phoebus rays into his horned head,
> And I myself by learned lore perceived
> That Ver approached and frosty winter fled
> I crossed the Thames to take the cheerful air,
> In open fields the weather was so fair.

Pleonasmus (Redundantia):

Quintillian (VII.iii.53f)
Vice. When we overload our style with a superfluity of words . . . . Sometimes the form of pleonasm may have a pleasing effect when used for emphasis.

Puttenham (257)
Too full speache.

Peacham (1577,Fii)
Scheme. When there be more words heaped upon a construction, than be necessary.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (257)

> For ever may my true loue live and never die
> And that mine eyes may see her crownde a Queene.

Prosopopoeia (Conformatio):

Scaliger (III.x.viii)
Under tractatio. If mute things are addressed, if speech is attributed to mute things, if not speech but sense is attributed to things without sense, if intelligence is assigned to the non-intelligent or to the half-intelligent such as animals, we have prosopopoeia. This figure includes fictive persons such as Fame and Furies, and things with human properties attributed to them. . . . All these beings are always invented.

EXAMPLE:

Fraunce (91f)
Arcadia finding herself in these desolate terms, doth speak . . . so unfortunately, that it doth appal her mind though she had leisure.

Prozeugma (Zeugma):

Cicero (De Oratore III.liv.206)
Scheme. One verb may be made to serve the purpose of a number of clauses.

Puttenham (163f)
Scheme. [T]o mo clauses then one . . . some such word be supplied to perfit the congruitie or sense of them all, . . . Prozeugma: supplie . . . in the forefront of seuerall clauses . . . Mezozeugma: in the middle of . . . clauses he serves . . . Hypozeugma: [When] such supplie be placed after all the clauses, and not before nor in the middle.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (165)
Prozeugma:

> Her beautie perst mine eyes, her speach mine wofull hart,
> Her presence all the powers of my discourse. Etc.

Soraismus (Cumulatio):

Puttenham (252)
Vice. [W]hen we make our speach or writinges of sundry langvages . . . not for the nonce or for any purpose (which were in part excusable) but ignorantly and affectedly.

EXAMPLE:

Puttenham (253)
And of an ingenious inuention, infanted with pleasant travaile.

Tapinosis (Humiliatio):

Quintillian (VIII.iii.48)
Vice of style. Meanness . . . when grandeur or dignity is diminished by the word used.

Puttenham (185)
Scheme. [I]f ye abase your thing or matter by ignorance or errour in the choice of your word . . . [a] vicious manner of speech.

Puttenham (259)
Vice. [T]o use such words and termes as do diminish and abbase the matter . . . set forth, by imparing the dignitie, height vigour or majestie of the cause take[n] in hand.

EXAMPLE:

Peacham (168)
To call . . . the Thames a brook, . . . great wisdom a pretty wit, an oration a tale.